

## **Historic, archived document**

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.





A clump of white flowered Iris (*Iris Elephantina*) in a colony where it was discovered in 1926. The locality was a swamp about fifteen miles East of New Orleans. The colony was totally destroyed within two years after it was discovered.—Reproduced from Journal of New York Botanical Garden by permission of Dr. John K. Small.

## + *The Louisiana Wild Native Iris* +

Its rediscovery by Dr. John K. Small, Ph. D., Sc. D., of the New York Botanical Garden.

---

Information of its habits, cultivation, propagation and distribution by Dr. C. V. Kraft, of

## *The Cypress Knee Nursery*

City Office  
1124 LAFAYETTE ST.  
New Orleans, La.

Nursery  
2030 Farragut St.  
Algiers, La.



Cypress Knee, the country home and office of Dr. C. V. Kraft of the Cypress Knee Nursery (Algiers,) New Orleans, La., where extensive study is being made of the Louisiana Wild Native Irises.

## + *The Louisiana Wild Native Iris* +

The discovery and extensive study of large natural fields of iris in southern Louisiana,—but more extensively in the vicinity of Algiers and New Orleans,—by John K. Small, Ph. D., Sc. D., who has been working with the New York Botanical Garden, and the consequent awakening and heightening of interest among people of the entire United States, opens to the CYPRESS KNEE NURSERY unparalleled scope for service in distributing, propagating and perpetuating this lovely species of unsurpassed beauty.

The further discovery that the Louisiana wild native iris lends itself readily to transplanting makes possible the cultivation of fields of these plants throughout the country. Dr. Small says, "Once established, these plantations would care for themselves in an environment which their ancestors occupied before man came on the scene and destroyed what nature had planted and developed through ages." Our experience, resulting from letters received from those to whom shipments have been made by us, justifies us in stating that these plants will thrive in any state in our Union.

The iris reaches its maximum development in Louisiana. Several thousand specimens of the mammoth iris, some of them more than seven feet tall, grow in southern Louisiana in more than two hundred hues of lavender, vio-

**In the North, these plants must be grown in ordinary dry but very rich soil. Thus planted, they will stand the winter up to southern Canada. If the roots and root stocks are in wet ground during the winter, they will likely not prove hardy so far north.**







In these dense swamps our collectors must often use a compass to find their way back to the road. Alligators, Rattlesnakes and Water Moccasins add to the hazard of collecting these plants.

let, lilac, henna, orange, and old rose, and all shades approaching red and blue.

These uncultivated flowers grow in a profusion and with a rare beauty unmatched by the dwarf types of yellow and purple iris common in northern climates.

The discovery of the natural iris beds was accidental. During a botanical trip from Florida to western Texas, Dr. Small caught a fleeting glimpse of them through the train window and immediately took steps to return and investigate. A special permit was obtained from the railroad, which placed a powered hand-car at the disposal of the expedition. Dr. Small said he and his companions had often waded waist-deep through water with an uncertain footing to reach the plants.

Commenting on the puzzling presence of the remarkable plants in the swamps, the botanist said the beds might represent the remains of a vast development of the variety in the more recent geologic times that followed the gradual southward advance of the Mississippi Delta from the interior. A second possible theory, according to Dr. Small, is that the irises represent the progeny of a local development of a few irises, some from the upper part of the Mississippi watershed, others from the Gulf region. These, having met and mingled in the favorable environment, may have produced the natural beds. Local flower lovers have for years gathered these lovely plants for their own gardens, but only recently have they been accorded intense botanical study and commercial development.

PRICES TO THE TRADE	
100 roots (rhizoms).....	\$ 5.00
500 roots (rhizoms).....	\$23.50
1000 roots (rhizoms).....	\$45.00

Y—ALGIERS, LA.





One of the blocks of wild irises lined out in our nursery. From these stands, colors will be separated and seeds collected.

At any rate, the iris beds lie in isolated and scattered spots about the bayou headlands near New Orleans and Algiers. Several thousand specimens of the mammoth irises have been taken to the New York Botanical Garden, where a thorough study is being made there, as well as at our plant, for purposes of hybridization and propagation. Much to the surprise of the botanists, the transplanted specimens have suffered no serious ill effects from the climatic change. There are small plantations of Louisiana transplanted irises thriving in Maryland, New Jersey and other parts of New York. Still smaller plantations are located in private reservations in other states, especially in California, where shipments have been made recently to Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Jose and other California sections, where they are growing these wonderful plants with success. Specimens are now growing in England, France, in Asia, Australia and in other parts of the Old World. So the fact of the Louisiana iris taking root and continuing its beautiful existence in other parts of the world seems well established.

In view of these facts, the Lower Mississippi Delta natural iris field constitutes the one most spectacular botanical and horticultural discovery in North America from the standpoint of a single genus within such a limited area. Aside from its magnitude, the outstanding points are the colonies of species, the great range and combination of colors, and the unusual size of the plants. Flowering stalks six feet tall are not unusual. Stalks seven feet high have been found. In such cases a six-foot man has to look up in order to see the flowers.





Our tallest-stemmed iris—*Iris giganteaerulea*, growing in a swamp near Cut-Off, Louisiana. In this swamp violet-flowered irises prevailed. The plants were mostly three to five feet tall. The plants in the colony shown above were fully seven feet tall. If some of the drooping leaves were straightened up they would overtop one's head.—Reproduced from Journal of New York Botanical Garden by permission of Dr. John K. Small.

### **The Range of Color of the Louisiana Wild Iris**

Mr. Alexander, co-student with Dr. John K. Small, of these Louisiana irises, records that it is interesting that the great range of color mentioned is more apparent than real. Among the many shades represented, none goes into true red and none into true blue. The nearest approaches to red in the numerous iris *fulva* variations always have a cast of orange; the nearest approaches to blue always have a cast of violet or purple; and the "red" and the "pinks" in the group *Roseanthae* are really not red or pink at all, but various shades of lilac, red-lilac, red-purple, red-violet, pink-lilac, and rosy-lilac. All

*THE CYPRESS KNEE NURSERY—ALGIERS, I.A.*



This shows how road building is destroying these beautiful plants. In the right foreground you see one of our collectors gathering what remains of a large clump of Purple Irises.

of these, with one or two exceptions, are represented within a certain few pages of the color dictionary when laid out for actual color-matching.

Mr. Alexander's color notes and descriptions based on sepals, i.e., the color of the blade and of the crest, indicate some **200 distinguishable forms**, which may be summarized as follows:

- six various shades of violet-blue, with about fifteen different combinations of crest and color;

- four various shades of lavender-blue, with about twelve different combinations of crest and color;

- eleven various shades of violet, with about forty different combinations of crest and color;

- seventeen various shades of red-violet, with about thirty-five different combinations of crest and color.

- fourteen various shades of lilac, with about twenty five different combinations of crest and color.

### **Natural Beds Being Destroyed**

The Louisiana wild irises are fast disappearing, due,

First, to the large number of collectors of these rare plants, who are taking them up by the thousands for shipment to France, Germany, Japan, China, England, etc., and to supply the different parks and state gardens throughout our country.

Second, the few remaining fields in the vicinity of New Orleans and Algiers are being destroyed as the result of the growth of the city, where low



places are being filled to make new streets in the many real-estate subdivisions.

Third, wholesale destruction is taking place as the result of the building of new roads and the digging of many miles of canals, and the dredging in the construction of the many levees so necessary in this section. It is quite a regrettable coincident that the many improvements above referred to should strike at the very heart of these wonderful natural iris beds.

### **Saving the Irises for Posterity**

It has been suggested to us by many botanists and floraculturists that some one in the immediate vicinity of New Orleans should devote his time and grounds in saving as many of the different varieties as possible. We have accepted this suggestion and are now engaged in the gathering, selecting, propagation, and sale of these wonderful plants and their seeds. In this connection, may we not mention some of the hardships endured by our collectors. Our best collectors average about two hundred roots a day. They are often required to find their way out of the swamps with the aid of a compass. Rubber hip boots are inadequate to keep their legs dry. They must resort to the use of a large cane knife to cut the undergrowth and the entanglement of vines with the Palmetto palms, and to keep a watchful eye for an occasional alligator, rattlesnake, or water moccasin. Automobiles, boats, skiffs, and pirogues are the conveyances necessary for these collections.

The Louisiana wild iris is not only found in the swamps, marshes and low lands, but also may be found in elevated places, but always near a natural bed where it is always moist. The desperate fight for existence put up by this wonderful plant is best illustrated by the fact that they will work their heads through the edge of a gravel road which has been constructed over some of the natural beds. This condition may be seen near Salix, Louisiana, along the route of the Southern Pacific Railroad, on Highway No. 90, O. S. T. (Old Spanish Trail).

It goes without saying that these lovely irises should be planted in moist places where they will reach their maximum growth and beauty, but if such places are not available, they should be given plenty of water, especially in early Spring during their flowering season, which extends over a period of from sixty to ninety days. We have found many colonies of this wild iris growing and blooming high and dry on top of high levees where the roots had been thrown up by dredges. They are persistent in their existence and when you have planted a bed of these lovely flowers they will take care of themselves from year to year, to furnish quantities of cut flowers, in the extensive field in which cut flowers are used.

### **Where to Plant Louisiana Wild Irises**

The Louisiana wild irises make their best showing when planted en mass or in groups in large beds. In estates, parks, and public grounds, several hundred should be planted in a bed, along the edge of ponds or pools or in the water where they will thrive. Drainage ditches become a thing of beauty when planted with wild irises. In the smaller gardens they make a splendid showing along the walks, fences, or lily ponds. There is also a striking contrast when planted with the ordinary commercial irises. We find from experience that the Louisiana wild irises do well when planted under large shade trees where they will furnish delightful blooms during the first few months of Spring.

A STATEMENT OF MR. GEORGE THOMAS, SUPT. OF THE NEW ORLEANS PARK-  
ING COMMISSION, ON THE LOUISIANA WILD IRISES

For many, many centuries nature has most lavishly developed and taken care of in the swamps of Louisiana a family of plants known as the iris. Left to themselves, they spread all over the landscape wherever conditions were favorable and appeared in the most infinite variety of colors. Dr. Small of the New York Botanical Gardens calls Louisiana the iris center of the world, and estimates that there are 200 or more color varieties amongst them; but with the advance of civilization such as the opening of the land to drainage and cultivation, the paving of highways, real estate development, etc., they are fast disappearing from their native habitat. I can recall when the land bordering Frenchmen Street from Marigny Canal to Gentilly Avenue was a mass of irises, but lately this was made a dumping ground and now scarcely any remain there. There were many such localities bordering the outskirts of the city where they were equally abundant and where at the present time not one can be found. So it is necessary, if we do not want our heritage of these wonderful irises to become entirely extinct, to collect all of the species and varieties that can be found and plant them where they can be preserved for future generations.

I note with a great deal of interest and satisfaction that the perpetuation of these wonderful plants is now being taken care of by Dr. C. V. Kraft, the proprietor of the Cypress Knee Nursery, located on the west side of the river in New Orleans, (Algiers) La. Here the plants are being set out in rows where they may be classified as to color, variety, size, etc., and where the seed will be gathered for the future. Doctor Kraft is making an intense investigation of these wonderful plants which will result in the preservation of the native Louisiana wild iris.

GEORGE THOMAS.

be  
ue  
ol-  
all  
sold  
ex-  
one.  
just

ER

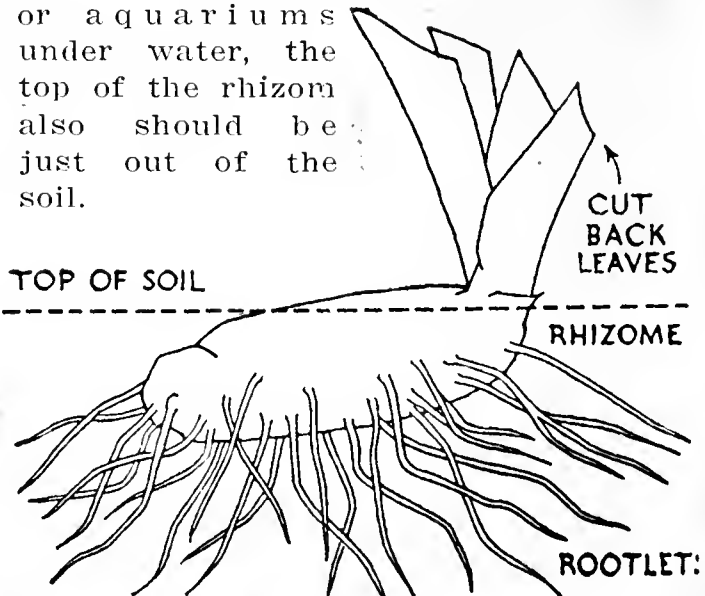
**PRIVATE GARDENS TO  
RECEIVE IRIS PLANTS**

More than 1000 iris plants will be delivered to New Orleans private gardens and almost as many others to the botanical field in Audubon Park as a result of the Louisiana Iris Society sale last week, it was announced by officers Sunday.

The study fields being arranged in City and Audubon Parks by the society are expected to attract botanists and others interested specifically in the iris from all parts of the world, according to officers.

sc  
day  
Elea  
school  
Wrig  
The  
this  
schools  
gregat  
ren F  
Peter  
will  
night  
day nig  
school,  
and th  
their

Irises should be replanted to occupy the same relative position as in nature. The illustration herewith shows this position. When growing in fish ponds or aquariums under water, the top of the rhizom also should be just out of the soil.



**PRICES OF IRIS RHIZOMS (ROOTS)  
Mixed Colors Only**

In lots of	25 to	50	20c	each
In lots of	50 to	100	15c	each
In lots of	100 to	500	14c	each
In lots of	500 to	1000	12½c	each

Shipments of 50 or less are sent parcel post prepaid.

All other shipments are by express, collect.

We do not ship C. O. D.—Send certified check, postal or express order.

*Cypress Knee Nursery*

2030 Farragut Street      New Orleans, (Algiers) La.      Phone ALgiers 1503